

---

## SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

### Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* feeding amongst a herd of African Buffalo *Syncerus caffer*

Lewis (1989) quoted two instances of Hamerkops *Scopus umbretta* taking prey items disturbed by solitary African Buffalo *Syncerus caffer*. A third example of this commensal relationship, in this case involving a herd of these ungulates, was observed while the 1989 note was in press.

The incident occurred on 30 March 1989, near the Kichwa Tembo Camp, in the north of the Maasai Mara Game Reserve (1°15S 35°01E), Kenya. A lone Hamerkop was walking in the midst of a herd of some 200 buffalo, catching prey items disturbed by their feet. As in the other two cases, the buffalo paid no attention whatsoever to the bird, but the latter was forced to fly up from time to time, to avoid being trampled by their hooves. This sighting is analogous to the record of a Hamerkop feeding amongst cattle in Zimbabwe (Dean & MacDonald 1981).

#### References

- DEAN, W.R.J. & MACDONALD, I.A.W. 1981. A review of African birds feeding in association with mammals. *Ostrich* 52:135–155.
- LEWIS, A.D. 1989. Two commensal feeding associations observed in Kenya. *Scopus* 12:102–103

*Dr Adrian D. Lewis, 36 Lilymead Avenue, Knowle, Bristol B54 2BX, England*

---

*Scopus* 14: 17, May 1990

Received 10 April 1989

### First record of the African Marsh Harrier *Circus ranivorus* for Ethiopia.

On 12 November 1988 we were bird watching along the western shore of Koka Lake in Ethiopia (8°23N, 39°02E), together with S.C. Madge and others, when a dark brown harrier flew directly overhead in a southerly direction. The bird was first seen by C-GC who quickly drew everybody's attention to it. On account of its distinctive plumage the bird was immediately identified as a juvenile African Marsh Harrier *Circus ranivorus*, a species which is familiar to both of us from Kenya and Botswana. This is apparently the first record for Ethiopia (Urban & Brown 1971, J.S. Ash, pers. comm.) and the most northerly ever recorded for this species.

The bird was watched for about a minute and the following description was compiled from notes made by C-GC and NJR:

Size, shape and flight action similar to the Eurasian Marsh Harrier *C. aeruginosus*. Overall colouration dark or rufous brown (including the head and shoulders), paler than female or juvenile Eurasian Marsh Harrier. Underparts rufous brown with a broad, even creamy-white inner primaries and largely creamy underwing coverts contrasting with dark brown secondaries and outer primaries. Head, back and rump dark rufous-brown. Upperwing and tail dark brown without noticeable barring.